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The Richmond (Ind.) High School Orchestra

The program Mr. Beach prepared for the Nashville meeting was remarkably strong. We all owe him a great debt of gratitude for gathering together such a wealth of good things. But without disparaging other values, I am wondering whether the performance of the Richmond High School Orchestra will not carry more of educational revelation and inspiration out into the hundreds of towns and cities represented by those in the audience than will any other single feature.

And here let me publicly disclaim any share in the achievements of the orchestra. I am a remote ancestor—that and nothing more. When I left Richmond the orchestra numbered 64 members and did not play nearly such advanced music as they play now, and did not play that more modest repertoire any more competently than they now play their advanced repertoire. Mr. Sloane, who came next, is much more intimately associated with the present orchestra, for he directed it when a great many of the present members sat under his baton, and handed it over to Mr. Maddy. But it is to Mr. Joseph Maddy, the present director, that the credit for the present extraordinary attainments of the orchestra belongs; and notwithstanding his extreme modesty and generous deprecation, I wish all loyal Conference members to help me in holding him and pinning the gold medal squarely on him, where it should be.

The educational message that the orchestra brought was not alone one of extraordinary musical attainment. What is implied when a city of 22,000 supports such a school orchestra, buys instruments, pays a salary sufficient to retain such a director of music, and helps the orchestra to raise a fund of

\$1,000 to go to a distant educational meeting and play? What is implied of a school system—a Board of Education, a Superintendent of Schools, High School teachers—when these young people are cheerfully released from school for a week for such a purpose and sent upon their way rejoicing? And can anyone who met those boys and girls believe that they have “suffered” in their “regular work” by reason of having done so much beyond this same “regular work”? I should like any school authorities who believe they have so suffered, and who jealously guard their own pupils against any such encroachments on time and vitiation of results on account of music, to pit some seventy-five of their own pupils against these seventy-five members of the Richmond High School Orchestra in a general scholarship test. I do not know these present seventy-five, but I know what the orchestra used to be, and a great many of the students of the school who gave long hours every week to practice in it were honor students. I think it had a greater proportion of honor students than its members entitled it to have.

And this leads me to say that in Pittsburgh we are at this time conducting an investigation that will answer the question as to whether students who are doing sterling work in music, requiring many hours of study and practice per week, usually *in addition to* their required 20 hours of “regular” work, are below or above the average in general scholarship. The results, when tabulated, may be against us or they may be for us. In any case, they will be made public; but I am not feeling especially apprehensive.

WILL EARTHART.